

Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC

TO: The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

ALSO: The Attorney General
The Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Administrator, Energy Research and
Development Administration
The U.S. Representative to the United Nations
The Archivist of the United States
The Counsel to the President

SUBJECT: A Comprehensive Review of the Classification System

I am concerned by weaknesses in the government's security classification system. Sensitive national security information must be protected. However too much information is now being classified and over-classified and is being withheld from the American public for too long.

In order to provide for greater openness in government while at the same time effectively protecting sensitive national security information, I direct that a new Executive Order be prepared to replace Executive Order 11652. This new order should establish the government's policies with respect to the classification, protection and declassification of national security information and material.

The new Executive Order should be prepared by an ad hoc committee co-chaired by a member of the National Security Council Staff and the Domestic Council Staff. This Committee should consider:

--How to provide for the maximum release of information to the American public on government activities and policies consistent with the need to protect sensitive national security information;

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- How to promote increased public access to this information through a more rapid and systematic declassification program;
- Overlaps between the new Executive Order and the Freedom of Information Act as amended and the Privacy Act;
- Which information requires protection and for how long and what criteria should be used in making this judgment;
- Which categories of classified material more than 20 years old could be declassified in bulk under appropriate guidelines;
- How the classification system can be simplified to make it more understandable and easier to implement;
- How unnecessary and duplicative practices and procedures can be eliminated, reducing expenses;
- Whether the Departments and Agencies should prepare classification and declassification guidelines for their employees;
- What kinds of disciplinary actions can be taken to prevent the misuse of the security classification system by government officials.

The ad hoc Committee should carefully consider how best to implement the provisions of the new Executive Order. In this respect they should examine the role and the effectiveness of the Interagency Classification Review Committee.

The new Executive Order should be ready for my signature by September 15, 1977.

This Presidential Review Memorandum supersedes National Security Study Memorandum 229.